

The Ballarat Naturalist

August 2018



Highlights of July's meeting

“Members’ Images - Something Different”.

Nine members presented short talks on a wide range of topics highlighting some point of difference.

Ken Hammond’s inspiration came from the local birds he encounters every day. In a variation of the ugly duckling, the image of a dusky moorhen chick belies the sleek, shiny plumage of the parent.



Waterbird parenting was in focus again with Ken’s endearing photo of a Great Crested Grebe carrying two chicks on her back



A Mouse For Tea—Carol Hall



Boobook owl

During 2017 Carol had the opportunity to attend three displays of raptors held by the proprietors of local sanctuaries where the birds are kept for educational purposes and may include rehabilitated injured birds.

Images included Nankeen Kestrel, Little Eagle, Wedge-tailed Eagle, Brown Goshawk, Whistling Kite, Masked Owl (adult and chick) Barn Owl, Barking Owl (adult and 9 week-old juvenile), Southern Boobook Owl, Australian Hobby and Peregrine Falcon.

Carol summed up the experience: “It was a wonderful chance to see such birds close-up and appreciate their behaviour, size and colouring.”

**Wedgetailed
Eagle**



Something different – Claire and Peter Dalman

Claire and Peter showed items gathered on travels that might be considered different. Items included two samples of sand, one pure white from Lucky Bay and the other very red from the Finke River area, demonstrating the wide range of colours that might be seen across Australia. There was also Lake Eyre salt, a beautiful shell from Coral Bay and Zebra rock from Kununurra.

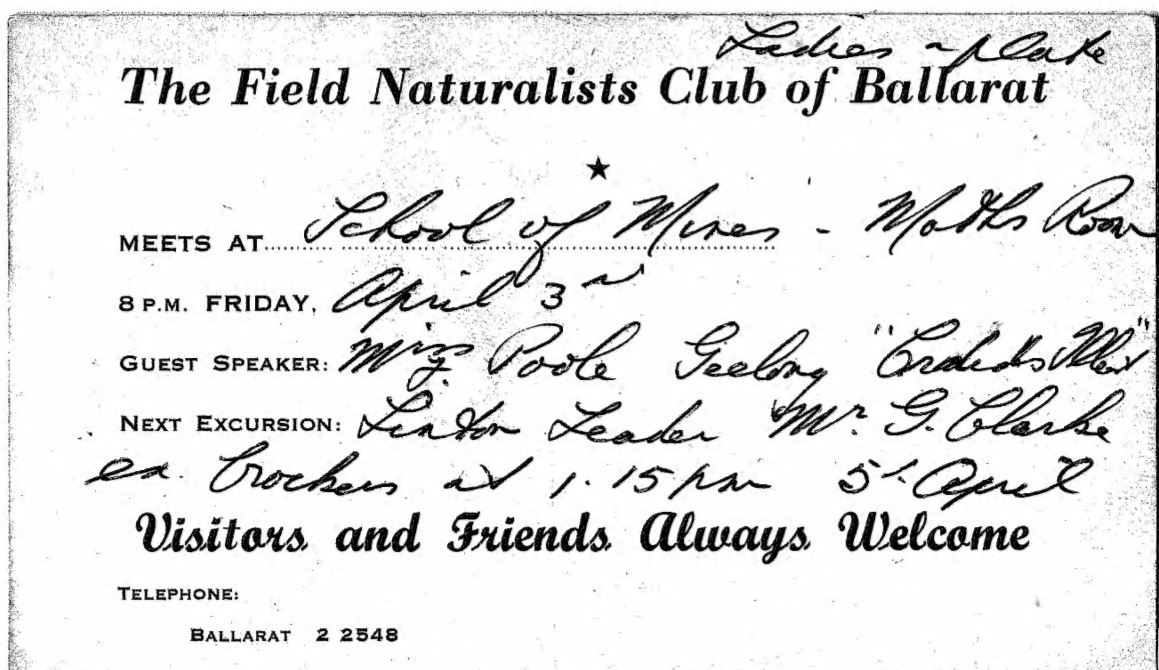
They also showed pictures that they considered different from the usual. There were pictures of Lakes Burrumbeet and Wendouree when dry, aboriginal wells near Maryborough and Amherst, a burnt magpie that had started a fire by contact with power lines and the anticline in suburban Littleton Street at Castlemaine. Another image was of the “Lollipop” tree on Mt Beckworth. This was planted 100 years ago and a community celebration day was held in April. It is a Monterey Pine (*Pinus radiata*). The tree has been declared the 2018 tree of the year by the National Trust of Victoria.



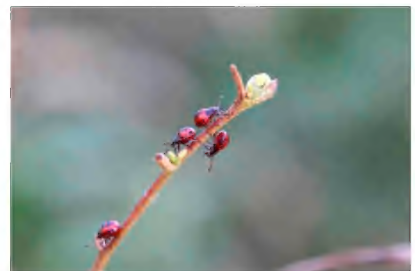
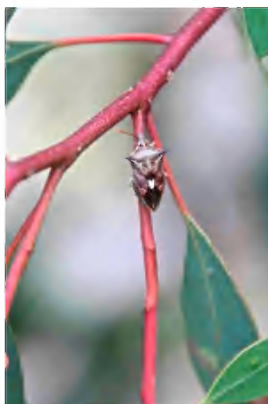
Pictures were shown of Bill and Marg Murphy delivering Pat Murphy’s collection of plants to the Melbourne Herbarium in October 2007.

Roger Thomas presented some cards used in the past to remind Field Nats about the next meeting. In the days before email, Yahoo! And Gmail, the secretary, Mrs Stella Bedggood had cards written up by hand to go out to members, telling them about the next meeting and the next excursion.

Roger's insights into the history of FNCB included venues such as different rooms at the School of Mines, dictated by the various presidents at the time, and having Mr. G. Clarke leading an excursion in Linton. Mr. Clarke founded the Clarksdale Reserve, still operated by Birdlife Australia.



Card from the early 1970s



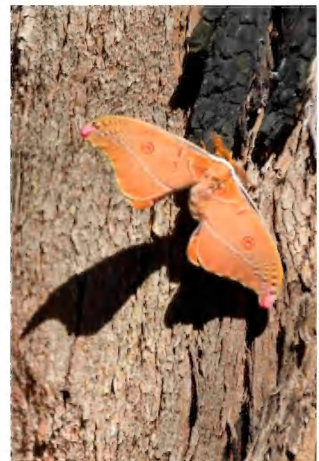
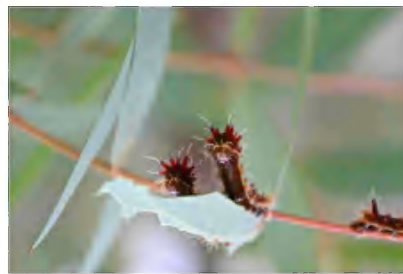
Life cycle of bugs—Emily Noble (next page)

Something Different - Emily Noble

Often in my nature wanderings, I'll come across insect eggs on a leaf, or a caterpillar, or nymph, or insect, and find myself wondering what they grow into, or what they grew from, or what they look like as a youngster or adult, depending on their life stage when I found them. That one discovery always leads to so many more questions, and I find that it is rare that the opportunity presents itself to fill all the gaps in, even in the age of Google.

I brought along two series of photos with almost all of the life cycle gaps filled, one for Emperor Gum Moths (below) and another for Shield Bugs (Pentatomidae) (previous page) thanks to fortuitous observations last summer.

The first series of photos showed Emperor Gum Moth caterpillar eggs and newly hatched caterpillars, slowly maturing caterpillars in their various colourful moults, their cocoon and the adult moth. The second series started with the tiny metallic eggs of a Shield Bug fringed sparsely with hairs, moving to a nymph stage (third instar) and several different adult Shield Bugs found in the vicinity, because I'm still not sure which adult bug the nymphs grow into. I'll keep working on it!



Wimmera River – The large flows of the 1970's—Andy Arnold

I chose for my topic “Something Different” to talk about exceptional water flows down the Wimmera River system from historically recorded events. Appropriately since there have not been water flows reaching points north of Black Flat in Wyperfeld National Park since the 1970s, this presentation was made using projected transparencies, the photographic recording technology of this period - certainly “Something Different”. These events from this earlier period first interested me because I attended the original “Friends of Wyperfeld National Park get together in June 1976 at the time when one of these large floods was occurring. I was fortunate to have been able to record this flooding event during the several years over which it occurred.

I started my talk by showing maps of the northern section of this river basin and listing the recorded flood history of the river (Ref: Durham 2001)

In 1830-34, 1851-54, 1870-74, Lake Albacutya overflowed and flood waters reached the northern extremity of the system at the Wirrengren Plain (to the north of Pine Plains).

In 1879 Lake Albacutya overflowed and flood waters reached Wonga Lake.

Lake Albacutya also overflowed in 1890-93, 1910, 1917-18, 1956, and 1975 reaching Leg of Mutton and in 1976 water flowed up Outlet Creek well north into Wyperfeld and reached Lake Brambruk in January and flowed into East Brambruk in February of that year.

The years 1956 and 1975-6 were some of the best years for being able to see water in a number of the lakes and parts of Outlet creek in Wyperfeld National Park. My transparencies covered the period 1974-77 starting with flows from the Wimmera River in 1974 contained within the levy banks near Jeparit flowing into Lake Hindmarsh and pictures of flows north into Lake Albacutya. They were followed by pictures of Lake Albacutya, full in November 1975 and with water overflowing into Outlet Creek and making its way slowly north into Wyperfeld NP, the first time since 1956. The next sequence taken during Easter 1976 was of Lake Albacutya showing blue green algal blooms on the west side of the lake and wave action on the east side and water within Wyperfeld NP reaching the western and eastern portions of Lake Brambruk, the extent of its northerly reach at that time. My slide show finished with pictures of the northern portion of Outlet Creek near Pine Plains blocked by sand with also the remains of old rude timber crossings probably dating from the floods of 1918 but amazingly still present in September 1977 and of the Wirrengren Plain which has likely stayed dry from flood waters since the late 1870's.

John Petheram's take on “something different” was typically quirky and distinctly African. Lions snoozing in the trees after a good feed.



Wilderness Australian-style—the Grampians is probably “wilder” than most parts of eastern Africa, at least in terms of population density. Perhaps not as far wildlife is concerned.





Bill Elder presented a brief report on the recent SEANA camp at Healesville where he learnt about invertebrate photography and got to try out his new digital camera. At Toolangi State Forest, he found many harvestmen – not spiders, but related arachnids. Harvestmen are in the Order Opiliones. They have 8 legs, but only one pair of eyes, often on small stalks, like a crab. They have large palps which operate vertically, whereas spider mouthparts operate horizontally. Harvestmen do not produce silk.

This one shows the typical structures on the body—note the almost metallic exoskeleton. Looking more like wires and blobs of solder. This image also shows the harvestman defence mechanism when disturbed. It pretends to be dead, and even manages to arrange its legs in bizarre, twisted ways as if it has just suffered a violent collapse or convulsion.

Extract from July meeting—held Friday 6th July 2018

Attendance: President John Gregurke welcomed 5 visitors and 25 members.

Apologies: Helen Young-Harvey, Val Hocking, Chris & Anna Baulch, Ambika & Indra Bone, Roy Pails, Bill Murphy, Sophie Akers, David and Sully Horwood, Wayne Walker, Wayne McGuire, Bernadette Cheesman, Shirley Faull, Mark Moravec and Nina Netherway.

Moved: P. Norquay

Seconded: P. Dalman

Carried.

Business Arising from Correspondence:

La Trobe University lecturer Susan Hoebee has requested any photos of insects/birds/mammals feeding on/pollinating *Grevillea bedgoodiana* flowers – to pass on to two Masters students who will be studying the possible pollination of *G. bedgoodiana* by nocturnal mammals over the coming year. Please contact Emily if you have any photos that you are willing to share with the students.

Reports:

Treasurer's Report:

Opening bal: \$8,222.52

Income \$90.00

Expenses \$15.40

Closing bal: \$8,302.12

Moved: L. Hanrahan

Seconded: T. Fletcher

Carried.

Excursion = July 8th 2018 - “Rediscovering Ballarat’s Bushland,” led by Emily Noble. Full report on page 10 and 11.

Field Reports

At Midlands Terrace, Ken noted Little Ravens starting a nest in a tree very near where Magpies nested a couple of years ago.

Emily showed the latest edition of *Muelleria*, the scientific journal of the National Herbarium of Victoria, in which Susan Kruss’ research paper on late FNCB member Pat Murphy has just been published, mentioning that it would be kept in the Club’s library for members to borrow.

Muelleria

36: 22–50

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A passion for plants: The botanical contribution of collector P.J. Murphy

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Abstract

Collector Murphy, P.J. listed on the online Australian Virtual Herbarium, collected plant specimens from the early 1980s to 2006. Fifteen specimens were sent to the National Herbarium of Victoria during her lifetime, and the remaining collection of 1123 specimens was donated to the Herbarium in 2007. Who was P.J. Murphy, why did she collect, and what can be discovered by examining her collection of specimens? Much of the information in this article is derived from the minutes of the Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat (FNCB) and from interviews with her husband, Bill Murphy, and members of FNCB.

Keywords: plant collecting, Ballarat, field naturalists, gender history

Introduction

The contribution of women to Australian botany has not yet been fully explored. Pat Murphy's contribution was significant both in her local area and through the 1138 specimens she collected that are now held at the National Herbarium, Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria (MEL). Pat's story extends the history of collectors and collecting beyond the colonial era into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, a period as yet only lightly touched on in the history of botany. One advantage of examining a more recent collector is the availability of people who knew Pat and whose memories of her can be accessed through oral history interviews. The Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat (FNCB) provided the context for Pat's learning about botany and her involvement in collecting (fig. 1a,b). I was able to



Figure 1 a. Pat Murphy c1999; b. Pat Murphy on a Field Naturalists' Club of Ballarat excursion 1995

Les was surprised and delighted to see quite tame Bassian Thrush and Eastern Yellow Robins in the carpark at Lake Elizabeth in the Otways. Brown Thornbills were pecking at an unidentified food source on the dam wall at West Barwon Dam.

Elsbeth and Paul spotted a Tawny Frogmouth sitting on the road at Navigators on their way to the meeting tonight.

Excursion Report - *Rediscovering Ballarat's Bushland*

Leader: Emily Noble

In 2002, the Club published *Discovering Ballarat's Bushlands*. Now that it is out-of-print and sold out, the Club is considering a new edition. The rationale behind this excursion was to visit some of the bushland areas included in the book and evaluate whether the information was still relevant, accurate and covered the key features or could be improved in some way.

A group of 11 field nat's gathered at the Blackberry Lane car park of Mt Buninyong Scenic Reserve on a cold morning with low cloud covering Mt Buninyong, and quite a few envious eyes on Elaine's umbrella. We walked past mature Messmate and Manna Gum, some with hollows. As we climbed higher the weedy species grew fewer. The ground cover was mainly Common Tussock-grass and Weeping Grass. Herbs among the grass included Bidgee-widgee, Native Violet, and Prickly Starwort. A variety of fungi were seen.



Beef-steak Fungus
Fistulina hepatica

Mt Buninyong

We reached a crater from which lava had flowed towards Buninyong. The lower part of the crater was a grassland area because frost prevented trees becoming established. A sign near the crater explained this volcano and another that formed the second crater we were next to visit had erupted several times from over one million years ago to as recently as twelve thousand years ago. Another sign gave a fascinating rendition of the Wadawurrung's Dream-time story of the event.

Birds observed during the morning were White-throated Treecreeper, both Yellow & Scarlet Robin, Grey Shrike-Thrush and Superb Fairy-wren. A concrete tank and trough were near the crater, perhaps from an earlier time when stock were grazed on the Mount.

A climb up the tower at the summit gave limited and sporadic views because of the low cloud. After lunch under the picnic shelter, we reviewed the information on Mt Buninyong Scenic Reserve published in 2002 and made some suggestions for improvement.

In the afternoon we travelled to the north-east corner of Union Jack Reserve and entered the reserve from Wirreanda Drive near the Locomotive Hill Mine. The area is marked with a plaque remembering the death of two miners. The open forest is dominated by Broad-leaved Peppermint on the higher ground with a sparse understorey of shrubs and a lichen crust. Thin-leaf Wattle was developing buds and Common Heath was flowering. As we moved down the hill Mess-mate and Scent-bark appeared. Along the creek there were Manna Gum, Blackwood, Prickly Moses and Prickly Currant-bush. Quite a few leaves of Sun Orchids and Caladenias were seen.

Five of us continued on to Durham Lead in our damp clothes, where we were joined by three members of Garibaldi Landcare Group. We inspected a patch of Crown land in Pioneer Lane. This was the most species rich area visited during the day. We saw many orchid leaves. Emily was able to explain the features used to identify the different genera and species including Caladenia, Diuris, Sun, Wax-lip, Gnat, Greenhood and Duck orchids. The only orchid found with seed capsules was Red-tip Greenhood. It was pleasing to see some Black Sheoak seedlings regenerating near mature plants.

Thanks to Emily for leading this excursion in the depth of winter. She was able to help us identify many interesting plants even though few were flowering.

John Gregurke

CALENDAR 2018

August

- Fri 3 *My Nature Year*, Roger Thomas, FNCB
 Sun 5 excursion to Ballarat Community Nursery and North
 Gardens Wetland led by Roger Thomas
 Tues 28 Committee meeting—to be confirmed

September

- Fri 7 “Outfoxing *Vulpes vulpes* for biodiversity conservation”
 Dr. Bronwyn Hradsky, Research Fellow, Melbourne Uni
 Sat 8 Narmbool Mathew Dowler, Education Officer, Narmbool
 Tues 24 Committee meeting, venue TBA
 Sept 29 to Oct 8 ANN Get Together, Halls Gap and Anglesea,
 Hosted by SEANA

Committee

President	John Gregurke
Vice Pres	Fran Hanrahan
Secretary	Emily Noble
Treasurer	Les Hanrahan
	Andy Arnold
	Bill Elder
	Val Hocking
	John Petheram
	Elsbeth Swan

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 Bill Elder

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Meetings are held at Federation University Gillies St Campus on the first Friday of the month at 7.30pm.

Excursions: Leave from the carpark of Federation University Gillies St Campus at 9.30 am, unless otherwise advised.

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